

P-20 Council Member Senator Kimberly Lightford speaks about getting consensus for legislation that puts the children of Illinois first.

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Nationally-Recognized Reforms Emphasize Teacher Performance, Strengthen School Administrator Standards

<http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/ShowPressRelease.cfm?SubjectID=2&RecNum=9465>

CHICAGO – June 13, 2011.

Governor Pat Quinn today signed landmark education reforms, which have garnered national attention for provisions that facilitate longer school days and stronger standards for teachers. The landmark reforms, sponsored by Sen. Kimberly Lightford (D-Maywood) and Rep. Linda Chapa La Via (D-Chicago), passed the General Assembly after months of collaboration between Governor's Office, legislators, education groups and teachers unions.

"Enacting education reform has been one of my top priorities as Governor, and one of my administration's main objectives for the spring legislative session. These historic reforms will help us make sure that students across Illinois learn from the best teachers," said Governor Quinn. "I would like to thank Sen. Lightford, Rep. Chapa La Via, members of my administration and the many education groups who worked tirelessly to put Illinois at the forefront of the nation in education reform.

"The reforms are expected to improve education in Illinois through enhanced accountability and training for teachers, administrators and school board members. The historic measure sets clear standards for teacher evaluations and prioritizes performance evaluations above tenure for decisions on teacher hiring and dismissal. These reforms represent unprecedented statewide agreement on issues that have gone unresolved across the nation. The new law also requires professional training for school board members, as well as a regularly administered survey of classroom conditions in school districts statewide.

"While some states are engaging in noisy and unproductive battles around education reform, Illinois is showing what can happen when adults work through their differences together," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "Through this very impressive collaboration of school management, teacher unions, education reform advocates, legislators and the governor, Illinois has created a powerful framework to strengthen the teaching profession and advance student learning in Illinois. This is an example that I hope states across the country will follow."

Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon, who spent a decade as a university professor, also praised the legislation, as well as the collaborative process that led to its passage. "This wave of education reform brought together teachers, administrators, parents and policymakers to do what was best – not for the adults in the room – but for the children of Illinois," said Lt. Governor Sheila Simon. "The result is meaningful legislation that will help us weed out bad teachers and seed new ones. These bills put students first, while also preserving the collective bargaining rights of students' greatest advocates. Today, we become a national model for education reform."

"This is a historic day for children and parents in Illinois," Sen. Lightford said. "I'm proud to have been able to keep all of the education stakeholders at the table actively involved in discussions. We put politics and personal agendas aside and put the children first. I look forward to seeing the enormous positive impact this bill will have on millions of students in Illinois."

House Sponsor Rep. Chapa La Via also praised the measures, pointing out the importance of their impact on children across Illinois. "These reforms are a turning point for education in Illinois, and an example for states nationwide to follow," said Rep. Chapa La Via. "Education reform will help to ensure every child has a chance to receive a quality education, and that teachers are treated fairly." Additionally, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who spoke at the event, praised the reforms for the impact they will have on students in Chicago. "This legislation will help ensure that Chicago has the tools we need to give our children the education they deserve," said Mayor Emanuel. "By giving students a longer school day and improving the performance standards for teachers, today we take a major step towards ensuring that every child, in every Chicago neighborhood, has access to a world-class education."

Groups that participated in drafting and passing the reforms include the Illinois Education Association, the Illinois Federation of Teachers, the Chicago Teachers Union, Stand for Children, Advance Illinois, the Illinois School Management Alliance, Illinois Association of School Administrators, Illinois Association of School Boards, Large Urban District Association, ED-RED, Legislative Education Network of DuPage, Chicago and Illinois Principals Association, and the Illinois Business Roundtable. Senate Bill 7 and its trailer bill, House Bill 1197 take effect immediately.